MR. MAGSDALE'S COURTSHIP.

CHAPTER II.—(Continued.)

Miss Cressburn was quite willing to marry him immediately if he wished it, but insisted on knowing his reason for such unnecessary haste. Peter beat about the bush for a while, and when finally cornered, admitted that he feared opposition from his 'family,' to whom he dreaded giving offense on account of his expectations. Mary Cressburn, who had her full share of proper pride, was roused, and declared her wish to be introduced to his family. Peter strongly demurred; he was much afraid that such a step would lead to a rupture, which might be avoided if she waited until after their marriage to make its acquaintance. Nothing the family could say then could untie the knot, and it might reasonably be expected to resign itself to the inevitable. It was plausibly put; but Mary was by no means satisfied. Was Peter ashamed of her? He made the only answer he could. Well, then, if he was not ashamed of her, she must have a better reason for his disinclination to let her meet his friends. Peter looked helpless and miserable, but had no other reason to give. Then he must distinctly understand that their wedding need not be discussed at all until she knew every member of his family; she would never have it said that the man she loved had been disinherited by reason of his secret marriage with her. She wanted everything done openly and in the light of day. If the family did not approve of his choice, then it would be for him to decide upon his course, whether he elected to throw over his relations or herself. She spoke bravely, though she felt with a sinking heart that she was insisting upon a condition which might wrest her lover from her, and leave her to the life of toil and drudgery from which she longed to escape. It could not be helped, and she would not abate a jot of her demand whatever the consequence might be.

To look at it from another point, it was only right and just that she should know everything about the man with whom she had consented to cast in her lot. That was the view Miss Parkins would take of it, and no one could gainsay its correctness. Her aunt was the only relative she had, and Mary held her in deserved esteem. She was a clear-headed, sensible old lady, who guarded her niece's interests with almost motherly care. She was not a woman to consent to such a proposition as Mr. Magsdale had made, and it was altogether out of the question to consider it seriously for a moment.

So Peter left Queen's Road in full possession of Miss Cressburn's opinions, feeling that from their very soundness they served to raise another obstacle in a path which had been difficult enough before. He had consistently referred to Cornelia as the 'family;' a prevarication of which he was not a little ashamed, and which did not simplify matters, now that he recognized that Mary meant to know his belongings before she would consent to marry him.

The 'family' looked curiously at her brother when he came in, but having drawn her own deductions from his lengthened absence, forbore to question him about it. She had no doubt in her own mind that Peter and Miss Terripeg had taken advantage of the beauty of the night to go for a little walk together, instead of proceeding straight to the lady's residence. A violation of the rules of propriety, but one which she was disposed to overlook under the circumstances.

'I like Anna Terripeg,' she remarked as he took his seat beside the fire; 'she always seems to enjoy being here too.'

'Yes,' said Peter heartily; 'she's a cheery, companionable little woman. You must ask her in again soon. I can always take her home, you know.'

Mrs. Bunshaw smiled a little triumphant smile and nodded wisely. 'Quite so, Peter,' she said dryly—'quite so.' And she went up-stairs, picturing her brother and Miss Terripeg already facing each other at the altar.

'I hope Cornelia's notion won't lead to complications,' reflected Peter as he stirred the fire into a blaze. 'I suppose I must let her keep it for the present, if I am ever to see Mary at all; for, upon my word, the only way I can get out of the house without being badgered to death about it, is on the pretext of taking Miss Terripeg home.'

A few days passed by, and he heard nothing from Miss Cressburn. Her silence made him uneasy; for it served to impress upon him that she was in earnest about being introduced to his relations, and though the matter was ever present in his thoughts, he had not yet been able to decide upon the course he ought to pursue. There seemed to be nothing for it but to wait as patiently as he might for the situation develop itself; though, unless something very unexpected should transpire, he could not fail to see the affair would be at a dead-lock.

'Miss Terripeg is coming over to spend the afternoon with me, Peter,' said Mrs. Bunshaw one morning soon after the occasion upon which he had discovered the advantage to be gained by escorting that lady home.

'Spend the afternoon?' he said doubtfully. 'You had better ask her to stay to dinner, hadn't you? It's a long way for her to come.'

'I'll ask her,' said Cornelia. She had been wondering whether her brother would make the suggestion, and received it in silent contentment. As luck would have it, Mary Cressburn selected the same day to write, asking him to come in and see her that evening at the usual hour. He lost no time in sending an answer, but he qualified his promise to go; for if anything happened to prevent Miss Terripeg staying to dine with them at Astley Villa, he might be unable to get away. So he said that an important engagement, which he was bound to keep, would probably detain him, but he would of course do his utmost to come to her at the appointed time.

Miss Terripeg remained to dinner, and Mr. Magsdale made ready to take her home afterwards; less cheerfully than he had done the last time, for he was far from happy about the interview he was about to have with his financee. The route to Miss Terripeg's dwelling took them across the end of Queen's Road; and as they passed under the gas-lamp at the corner, Peter noticed a woman stop to look after them. It crossed his mind that the figure resembled that of Miss Parkins, but he could not be certain. He reached his real destination soon after leaving his charge at her own door, and was surprised to hear that Miss Cressburn had retired and would not be able to see him: he began to think there was something amiss, and the coldness with which her aunt received him did nothing to relieve his apprehensions. She cut short his inquiries about her niece and put him on his trial at once: we use the expression advisedly, for he felt far more like a criminal than a lover before Miss Parkins had done with him.

CHAPTER III.—DEEPER, AND DEEPER STILL.

Mr. Magsdale's conference with his cousin brought him little comfort. Allan admitted that when he recommended a private marriage he had quite overlooked the possibility of Miss Cressburn raising objections; but since she insisted on following the conventional usage of the nineteenth century, he did not see that Peter had any right to oppose her.—What would Allan advise him to do, then?—It appeared to him that no advice was called for; Peter must take his intended down to Astley Villa and introduce her to Mrs. Bunshaw, and the sooner he did it the better.—Could Allan help him at all in it?—Certainly not. This wasn't a case for the intervention of an uninterested party; he had done quite as much as he could to help him already, and Peter was quite able to fight his own battles; at anyrate, if he wasn't, he ought to be.—After that, our friend understood that he need not look to his cousin for assistance, and went sorrowfully back to his office.

A very despondent miserable Peter crept down to Putney that evening. He felt that every one was against him, that there was nobody to sympathise or help, now that Allan had washed his hands of the business. He was aggrieved at his cousin's defection; he had aided and encouraged him so long as the path of his love ran smoothly, but the moment difficulty arose, he drew back, and bade him find his way through it by himself. It is to be feared that Peter's love was of that delicate hothouse growth which is incapable of withstanding rough treatment; which requires such gentle nurturing that it is not worth bringing to life, and does not deserve its name. His too tender passion was overshadowed, almost blighted, by the selfish fears which filled his heart. He had no ardent longing to see Mary Cressburn now; the knowledge that he must fulfill the promise he had made and face the consequences, hung over him so heavily that he dreaded meeting her. He had allowed three days to slip by since he received her answer to the letter wherein he promised to take her to see his relations, and was no nearer making up his mind to do it on the third day than on the first. He had a sneaking hope that she might relent if he waited long enough, and beg him to marry her how and when he willed. But time went on, and she made no sign; indeed, if she had consented to a secret marriage now, it is doubtful whether Peter's weak-knee'd devotion would have been equal to the test.

Allan had given sound advice when he recommended his cousin to lose no time in making Mrs. Bunshaw acquainted with Mary Cressburn, though he knew nothing of the former's scheme regarding Miss Terripeg. Peter never lacked opportunities of going to Queen's Road now, had he cared to make use of them; he found his sister's friend at Astley Villa so frequently that her absence was more noticeable than her presence. She came early and stayed late, and worked perseveringly to establish herself in his good graces. She studied his peculiarities and tastes with an unobtrusive diligence which he gradually and insensibly grew to appreciate; she sought his advice, and listened to his opinions with a deferential respect for his superior wisdom which could not fail to impress a weak vain man with an idea of her good sense. It was not long before he overcame the old antipathy, which owed its origin more to Mrs. Bunshaw's injudicious management than to any personal attributes of the lady herself; and without being absolutely disloyal to his fiancee, he formed a closer friendship than Miss Cressburn would have been at all likely to approve of, or, indeed, was entirely safe for so weak a vessel to indulge in.

Days lengthened into weeks, and Peter saw himself drifting slowly but surely into an entanglement which he had not the strength to avoid. A month passed, and Mary Cressburn had never called upon him to make good his word, though once she wrote, somewhat coldly, asking when he intended to visit her again. It roused the uneasiness he had tried to quell, and at the same time convinced him that he might trust to her affection to obtain his own terms with her. She wanted him back, and he would go when she offered to set him free from the promise he had made. Her love for him was growing keener and brighter with starvation; and his, though he hardly knew it himself, was growing weaker and colder day by day. It was easy to leave her letter unanswered. She would understand that the promise she had extorted from him was the reason of his silence, and would know how to recall him if she wished; so Mary received no reply to her letter, and he went unhindered on his dangerous way.

It chanced one evening that Allan Magsdale, finding time hang heavily on his hands, made an excursion down to Queen's Road to see Miss Parkins and her niece. He had neither heard nor seen anything of his cousin since the day he had appealed to him for advice, and had a little curiosity to know how the affair with Miss Cressburn was progressing. Something more than curiosity prompted his visit: he had been the means of making Peter known to the young lady, and, when his attentions to her became obvious, has satisfied Miss Parkins of his ability to marry, in a pecuniary sense. He had, as we have already remarked, done much to bring them together, and felt himself in a measure responsible for Peter's good faith. He found the ladies at home, and met with cordial reception they had always given him; but when he asked about his cousin, his question was received in silence, whilst aunt and niece exchanged glances as though they expected this and did not care to touch upon the subject.

'We have not seen Mr. Magsdale for over a month,' said Miss Parkins with stiff formality, after an awkward pause.

'Of course Mr. Magsdale may have been ill,' added Mary in excusing tones. 'I wrote to him a fortnight ago; but he did not answer.'

'We have not heard of Mr. Magsdale for over a month,' said Miss Parkins as gravely as before.

'I haven't heard from him myself for a long time,' said Allan, who was anxious to defend his cousin, though an angry suspicion was raising its head, despite his efforts to persuade himself that nothing was wrong. Mary rose and left the room, murmuring some apology; and he was satisfied that she believed Peter to have broken faith with her.

'Do you know what has caused this?' he asked, as soon as he was alone with Miss Parkins.

The old lady laid down her work, and delivered herself of the feelings which had been pent up in her breast, unrelieved by speech even to her niece. She spoke calmly, but with an undertone of irritation. 'The last time Mr. Magsdale came here I saw him alone, for something had occurred to make me think that he was not behaving honestly. I told him then that we didn't want to see him again until he was prepared to introduce Mary to his family, as she wished. The next day she told me that he had written promising to do it, and that she had asked him to call and arrange a day. Neither of us has heard a word about him since, and it's my belief that if we leave him alone, we never shall. He is a villain, that man! Mary says she has done with him for good and all; but I haven't.' The emphasis and energy of Miss Parkins' last words told Allan that she was in earnest, and that trouble in one shape or another was in store for Peter. He asked no more questions; he was disgusted with his cousin's cowardly folly, and felt that he would richly deserve the worst fate it could bring upon him.

'I would never have believed this of him, had I not heard it from you,' he said. 'I will go down to Astley Villa to-morrow and find out what it means, if you think that I could do any good.'

'I don't think you could help us in that way, Mr. Allan, thank you. I think, too, that I can settle accounts with Mr. Magsdale myself, though I must do it without saying a word to Mary.'

Allan had no doubt of her ability to deal with Peter, and was relieved to find that his own connection with the affair did not saddle him with the task of giving assistance in bringing his kinsman to book.

Miss Parkins was a woman possessing much fixity of purpose; and the day after her conversation with Allan, she resolved to take the business in hand at once; she said nothing to Mary, being quite aware that she would strongly resent any step being taken which might lead Peter to suppose that he still held a place in her thoughts. Miss Parkins' plan of action was rather of action was rather undefined: she meant to call at Astley Villa, and show the false lover up in his true colours before the circle of haughty relatives which his references to the 'family' led her to suppose she would find there. What such exposure might lead to, she did not know; but circumstances would have to guide her thereafter. Accordingly, she started on her mission the same afternoon, and reached the house at an hour when Peter was busy at his desk in Somerset House.

Was Mr. Magsdale at home?—No; Mr. Magsdale was not; but Mrs. Bunshaw was in, if the lady would like to see her. Miss Parkins hesitated for a moment: the name of Bunshaw was a household word not only in the region of Putney but for a radius of fully half a mile round, and was not entirely new to her, though she could not at once recollect how it sounded familiar. Ah! of course, Cornelia Bunshaw, the champion of woman's rights. She had no idea what relationship the lady might bear towards Peter Magsdale, but clearly she was some near connection.—Yes, she would see Mrs. Bunshaw, please; and she was conducted into that celebrity's 'study,' where she waited until the owner appeared.

'Miss Parkins, I am informed,' said Cornelia in her grandest manner as she entered the room. She had a good memory for names and faces, and at once recognised in her visitor the lady whom she had seen with her brother and cousin in the street some weeks previously, and whose niece she had been led to understand was the 'attraction' which drew Allan to Queen's Road on that Sunday. She sat down, wondering what could have brought the young lady's aunt to Astley Villa to see her.

Miss Parkins was a little at a loss to know how she had best approach the object of her visit, but, after a preliminary cough, she rushed into it with startling straightforwardness. 'I came to ask for an explanation of Mr. Magsdale's conduct towards my niece, Miss Mary Cressburn,' she said, and stopped.

Cornelia, like the clever woman she was, saw it all quite plainly before she heard another word. Allan had been 'amusing himself' with Miss Cressburn, and had gone off in a hurry when he found that he had carried it too far. His answer, when she expressed her regret at his departure, and the way he had spoken of the friends he had taken Peter to see, flashed across her mind. Of course, it was just what a hare-brained fellow like Allan would do, to love and ride away as soon as he saw he was getting into trouble.

'You refer to my cousin, who resided here until four or five weeks ago,' she answered. 'He is not with us now, and I am not acquainted with his whereabouts.'

It was just about five weeks since Peter's last visit to Queen's Road; and Miss Parkins, who was quite ignorant of that perfidious individual's affinity to the lady before her, naturally accepted the information. It upset her calculations; she could not expect much from Mrs. Bunshaw the cousin. But Mrs. Bunshaw the advocate for the rights of women was the very best person whose sympathies she could enlist. She was a rapid thinker, and changed her ground with considerable skill.

'I am sorry to learn that he is nearly related to one so universally known and respected as yourself, Mrs. Bunshaw' (Cornelia gave a cast-iron smile of acknowledgment); 'but now I have troubled you thus far, I am tempted to ask for your advice.'

Mrs. Bunshaw's grim visage relaxed. Every one likes to be asked for advice, and she loved it. Advice about dealing with Allan's misconduct, too; it was most gratifying, and she grew quite gracious.

'I shall be happy to afford you any assistance, Miss Parkins, even though a relative of my own should be the offender. The claims of consanguinity must ever bow to Principle.' It was a high-minded sentiment, and Cornelia felt that she was doing herself justice.

'You encourage me to proceed, madam,' said Miss Parkins, a little overawed. 'About six months ago, Mr. Magsdale was introduced to my niece; he paid continual visits, and their intimacy resulted in his making Mary a definite offer of marriage, which she accepted. Soon afterwards, he proposed to marry her secretly; but Mary of course wouldn't hear of it; and since she refused to do so, we have heard nothing more of him.'

'Did he assign no reason for wishing to keep his marriage private?'

'He said he feared opposition from his relations. I must add that he promised to present my niece to them, but never made any attempt to keep his word.'

'And you have heard nothing of him now, for a month?'

'Nothing whatever, Mrs. Bunshaw.'

'I deeply regret to confess that such behaviour is quite in accordance with the estimate I have formed of my cousin's character.—But what do you propose to do?'

'I had intended to make his conduct known to his relatives, first of all.'

'He has none, except my brother and myself.'

'Then, I fear we can do nothing,' said Miss Parkins with a sigh.

'You have not considered the propriety of using the weapons offered by the law?'

Miss Parkins had never thought of taking such extreme measures: Mary Cressburn would be furious if she dared to hint at an action for breach of promise of marriage, and publicity would be quite as objectionable to herself.

'My niece would never consent to the course you propose,' she said; 'we must allow the matter to drop.'

'Your niece's duty towards her sex should be her first thought, Miss Parkins,' said Mrs. Bunshaw sententiously; 'but I see no necessity for letting her know what we do. I can vouch for it that Mr. Magsdale will never face an action.'

'Mary would never forgive me if I made use of her name, as I should of course have to do; and even if he paid damages under threat of legal proceedings, she would not look at a penny of it. I'm afraid it isn't to be thought of.'

But Mrs. Bunshaw was not so easily foiled. Allen appeared to have behaved disgracefully, and she was not unwilling to help to punish him. She thought for a minute before she spoke again. 'Is your niece of age, Miss Parkins?'

'Not yet, Mrs. Bunshaw.'

'Then the duty of securing justice for her, the onus of protecting her from such designing knaves, devolves upon you, whether she approves of your methods or not.'

Miss Parkins wavered. Mrs. Bunshaw, who must know the man intimately, was certain he would not face the ordeal of a trial. She thirsted to avenge her niece, and if she could do so by the simple expedient of a lawyer's letter, she might perhaps venture upon that, unknown to Mary Cressburn. She was not influenced by any hope of obtaining compensation; her aims were purely retributive; if she could succeed in making Mr. Magsdale suffer for his faithlessness, she would be quite content. The only feasible means of punishment were those suggested by Mrs. Bunshaw, and she began to give way.

'Even if I wished to go to law, I could not afford the expense,' she said.

(To be Continued.)

HIS FIRST OPERATION.

Young Surgeon's Experience in Cutting Off a Man's Big Toe.

"Do you recall the first operation you ever performed yourself? was asked a surgeon. "Indeed, I remember it very well, I was in an hospital where there were 3,500 beds and thirty-three surgeons in charge. I was one of the young assistant surgeons. If an operations was necessary in any of the wards it was our duty to report it to the surgeon in charge, who then performed the operation if he chose. I reported to my surgeon the importance of an amputation of a great toe. The surgeon came and looked at the man and concurred with my opinion that an amputation was necessary. I was directed to get everything ready for the operation. 'Then,' said the surgeon, 'I will come and operate if I can. If not you go on and perform the operation yourself.'

"I told my young associates of the order, and they said: 'Well you go and get ready but he won't come. You will have to do the operation yourself.' And that was the way it turned out. The operation was to be at 2 o'clock. All the night before I was rehearsing what I intended to do in my mind and dreaming of it in my sleep. The next day I could not eat my luncheon. My hands and feet were cold. When it came time to commence the operation I could only steady my nerve by threading needles. I said give me the needles to thread. I am very particular about my thread.' I took a needle and commenced poking at the eye. In a few seconds my hand obeyed my will and became as steady as I could wish. I performed the operation successfully. After that I went on performing a great many operations, but it was years before I could take 1 o'clock luncheon if I had to operate at 2 o'clock.

How to Cure Stammering.

Stammerers rarely, if ever, show any impediment of speech when speaking in whispers. On this fact a new method of treatment has been founded, which is as follows: For the first ten days speaking is prohibited. This will allow rest to the voice, and constitute the preliminary stage of treatment. During the next ten days speaking is permissible in a whispering voice, and in the course of the next fifteen days the ordinary conversational tone may be gradually employed.

BIBLE DISTRIBUTION.

MILLIONS OF THEM BEING CIRCULATED EVERY YEAR.

Literature That is in More Languages With a Larger Distribution Than Any Other—From the Most Expensive it Has Become the Cheapest Volume in the World.

Six millions of books are a great many, and that number represents the world's output of the Christian Scriptures during the last year says the New York Herald. The number of Bibles distributed since the organization of the British and Foreign Bible Society of London, in 1804, is 260,000,000, or enough volumes, if laid end to end, to reach a distance of more than fifty thousand miles. The British society and the American Bible Society of New York, since its establishment, in 1816, have been the two great organizations of the world for the translation, publication, and circulation of the books of the Bible. Their work has been a tremendous and a growing one, yearly exhausting their increasing resources, and reaching a magnitude that is surprising.

GROWTH OF THE WORK.

From a rare, and the most expensive book, the Bible has become the most common and cheapest publication in the world. Dr. Plumer, in his tract "How to Use the Bible," says:—"In the thirteenth century, in England, two arches of the London bridge cost £25. At the same time a copy of the Bible with a few explanatory notes cost £30. Then the wages of a labourer amounted to but ninepence a week."

In other words, the cost of such a Bible was equal to the entire wages, in money, of a labouring man for over fifteen years. At so late a period as that of the American Revolution the very cheapest editions of the Bible were valued at not less than $2 a volume. Now an entire English Bible is sold for twenty cents, and the New Testament can be bought for five cents.

The increase in the supply has been as wonderful as the decrease in the cost. Before the age of printing a copyist would work for months to produce a single copy of the Bible, that was almost priceless, to be secured to its place with a chain, and handled by a fortunate few, only with the greatest of care. Then, though the introduction of printing increased the supply most marvellously the high price yet held them beyond the reach of the average reader. It was only after organized societies took charge of the printing and distribution that no one who wished a Bible need go without it. And the people have wished them with a desire that has increased with the advancement of general learning, the cultivation of thought, and the growth of the spirit of criticism.

THIS GROWING DEMAND

for the Christian Scriptures has, on the most part, been met, whether it has come from Greenland's icy mountains or India's coral strand, and whether in the language of a Chinese, a Zulu, or any other tongue more nearly approaching the English.

Last year the British and Foreign Bible Society distributed 2,185,618 Bibles in foreign countries, and the American Bible Society exported 634,025 copies. These books were printed in forty-one different languages. Many complete Bibles and portions of Scripture were also printed by the American Society at Beirut, Constantinople, Shanghai, Bangkok, Yokohama, Paris, and Bremen.

An idea of the vast territory reached by the New York society and the variety of languages employed may be gained from the fact that last year the Chinese received from the New York society 1,205 Testaments in their language, the Zulus 2,005. Portuguese 2,462, Italians 4,717, Poles, 3,406, Bohemians 1,778, Dakota Indians 324, Marshall Islanders 630. The list also includes Irish, Dutch, Danish, Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, Turkish, Russian and Ojibwa.

The distribution of these books and the teaching of their contents means the employment of an army of missionaries and colporteurs, who have to encounter many and great obstacles in the way of poverty, illiteracy, and prejudice. They suffer from accusations, arrest, imprisonment, antagonism of other religions, uprisings against them, and war itself. Yet they work on, and will continue to work.

THE FIELD AT HOME.

While the heathen of foreign lands are supplied with copies of the Scriptures those at home are not neglected and increasing work in the direction of a systematic distribution of the English Bible is being carried on. During last year about 950,000 Bibles, Testaments, and portions of Scripture have been distributed by the various home societies. Six thousand families have been visited. About one-fifth of them were found without Bibles and were supplied.

Then thousands of volumes of Scriptures are being distributed among destitute Sunday schools, given to the army and navy, to immigrants, freedmen, the poor and criminal institutions. In this connection the blind are not lost sight of, for fifty years ago was began the publication of the entire Bible in the Boston line letter, and the books are yet manufactured in increasing editions and sold at a price slightly below their cost.

During last year 25,000 volumes of the Scriptures were distributed in New York city. The city work in the distribution of Bibles has some interesting features. Through 268 distributing agencies, such as missions, churches, and Sunday schools, during the year 20,000 volumes were sent out and 900 Bibles placed in the rooms of prominent hotels.

Large as the home distribution of Bibles is, it is insignificant when compared with the vast volume of foreign work.

Ingenious Excuse.

Frank comes into the house in a very sorry plight.

Mercy on us! exclaims his father. How you look! You are soaked.

Please, papa, I fell into the canal.

What! with your new trousers on?

Yes, papa, I didn't have time to take them off.